

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

This Document contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States, within the meaning of Title 18, Sections 793 and 794, of the U.S. Code, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its contents to or receipt by an unauthorized person is prohibited by law. The reproduction of this form is prohibited.

SECRET/CONTROL - U. S. OFFICIALS ONLY
SECURITY INFORMATION

COUNTRY	USSR (Estonian SSR)	REPORT NO.	[REDACTED] 25X1A
SUBJECT	Seizure of German Merchant Ship by Soviet Naval Vessel	DATE DISTR.	1 June 1953
	25X1A	NO. OF PAGES	2
DATE OF INFO.	[REDACTED]	REQUIREMENT NO.	RD
PLACE ACQUIRED	[REDACTED]	REFERENCES	

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

25X1X

SOURCE: [REDACTED]

1. Sailing from Stockholm in late December 1951, the M. S. ELBING IV, owned by the Zedler Shipping Firm in Luebeck, deviated considerably on easterly courses as she proceeded through the Schaeren Islands. At 1615 hours on 29 December, when she stopped to take soundings in snow flurries and a light northwesterly breeze, she was captured off Paldiski (N 59-21, E 24-04) by a Soviet naval vessel with the hull number T-62. The rising sea made anchoring in Keibu Bay (N 59-15, E 23-38), as the Soviets originally directed, too risky, so she was escorted by the Soviet vessel to Paldiski Bay, where she anchored at 0600 hours 30 December, at a depth of 22 meters, approximately between the Paldiski harbor light and Pakerort (N 59-21, E 24-05). She was detained there until 1800 hours 9 January 1952, when she was allowed to proceed to Kotka (N 60-17, E 26-53). A vessel numbered T-2 accompanied her as far as Porkkala (N 59-59, E 24-26). The ELBING IV left Kotka for Ostend on 12 January 1952.
2. The captain of the vessel which captured the ELBING IV was a Soviet naval lieutenant, with two gold stripes on his sleeves. He was accompanied by a political officer, presumed to be second in command, who wore two gold stripes with red piping, and had red shoulderboards lettered TF (TФ). Both officers spoke English. The captain stated that he had followed the ELBING IV for an hour, steering in her bearing.
3. The captain and the political officer were accompanied as they boarded the ELBING IV by eight marines, who posted themselves throughout the ship. The crew was mustered on deck and remained there while a search of the ship proceeded for several hours.
4. The capturing ship, which was painted black and flew no flag, possessed a radar device on the forward masthead, one 30-to 40-millimeter gun foreward and one aft, and a canvas covered machine gun on the bridge. Her complement numbered 25.¹
5. About an hour after the capture, the visibility became good upon the cessation of the snow flurries. No lights were seen on the Estonian coast. At 1800 hours, however, lights appeared; the Pakerort light could be distinguished clearly. The conclusion was drawn that an alarm had been disseminated when the ELBING IV had first been perceived in the area, and that the "all clear" had sounded when the harmless and/or non-belligerent nature of the ELBING IV was disclosed by her captor.

SECRET/CONTROL - U. S. OFFICIALS ONLY

[REDACTED]

61

25X1A

-2-

6. No distinguishing insignia or armament identified the gray, 15-meter-long cutter which guarded the ELBING IV while she was anchored in Paldiski Bay. The T-62 had put into Paldiski harbor. Possibly because of poor visibility and snow flurries, the crew could make out through field glasses no fortifications on shore; only four large boathouses which presumably housed a variety of small vessels. The Soviets confiscated the glasses on 1 January; the radio room had been locked upon the ship's capture.
7. The crew surmised that the Soviets were continually surveying the ELBING IV by radar; she was dragging anchor and was twice asked, in the middle of the thick snow flurries, by the guarding cutter to pay out more chain.
8. A Soviet commission from Tallinn (N 59-23, E 24-45) boarded the ship and interrogated the crew on 1 January 1952. The captain was asked whether the ship's owners knew his whereabouts; the crew answered miscellaneous questions. After the interrogation, a guard of two men remained on board, but the crew was allowed to move freely about the deck. On 4 January, a commission from Leningrad conducted a more probing interrogation. Their questions focused on the crew members' military rank, experiences in captivity, knowledge of foreign languages, and particular experiences. They intensively questioned each member of the crew on the Allied armed forces in Western Germany, and gave each a voluminous questionnaire on the subject to fill out. The commission consisted of several men in civilian clothes and two officers with a green band around their caps.
9. Copies of the Nachrichten fuer Seefahrer (Notices to Mariners) and the Bekantmachungen des Deutschen Hydrographischen Instituts (Bulletin of the German Hydrographic Institute) were appropriated by the commission, who also made use of the ship's articles and discharge books. When they discovered from the latter that the second engineer had worked at the Norwegian Heroen Works, an artificial nitrate factory in Skienfjord, they quizzed him exhaustively on the subject, concentrating on its production and security measures. They also wondered whether any military units were stationed in the vicinity of the plant. Upon the termination of this line of questioning, the commission offered the second engineer a post in the USSR in which he would receive additional training. He would have been allowed to bring his family.

25X1A

1. [REDACTED] Comment. The Soviet vessel was probably a T-43 Class minesweeper.

SECRET/CONTROL - U. S. OFFICIALS ONLY